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FORMER GSA CHIEF OF STAFF DAVID SAFAVIAN CONVICTED OF OBSTRUCTION, MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS

WASHINGTON – A federal jury in Washington, D.C., convicted David H. Safavian, the former chief of staff for the General Services Administration (GSA), of obstructing a GSA proceeding and making false statements, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division announced today.

The jury convicted Safavian today of four charges stemming from an October 2005 indictment, following an eight-day trial and four days of jury deliberation. The jury found that from May 16, 2002 until January 2004, Safavian made false statements and obstructed investigations into his relationship with former Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The investigations focused on whether Safavian, the chief of staff at the GSA from May 2002 until January 2004, aided Abramoff in his attempts to acquire GSA-controlled property in and around Washington, D.C. In August 2002, Abramoff took Safavian and others on a golf trip to Scotland.

The jury heard evidence at trial that Safavian made a false statement to a GSA ethics officer claiming that Abramoff had no business with GSA at the time Safavian was planning to travel with the lobbyist to Scotland. He repeated the same statements to a GSA Office of Inspector General special agent, again concealing the fact that Abramoff had business before the GSA prior to the August 2002 golf trip and that Safavian was aiding Abramoff in his attempts to do business with GSA.

The jury found Safavian not guilty of a fifth count of the indictment, a charge of attempting to mislead the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs by falsely claiming to the committee during its investigation that Abramoff had no business before GSA at the time of the Scotland trip. Abramoff pleaded guilty in January 2006 to charges of conspiracy, aiding and abetting honest services mail fraud and tax evasion, and agreed to cooperate with investigators in an ongoing criminal investigation.

“Today a jury found David Safavian, a former federal official, guilty of lying to Congress and GSA investigators about his dealings with lobbyist Jack Abramoff,” said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. “The message of this verdict is clear: in answering questions posed by Congress and by federal agencies, public officials have the same obligation as does the public for which they serve – to tell the truth. No one is above the law.”

From November 2004 until September 2005, Safavian had served as the administrator for the Office of Federal Procurement Policy at the Office of Management and Budget. He faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison on each of the four counts, a \$250,000 fine and three years of supervised release. Sentencing is scheduled for Oct. 12, 2006.

The case was prosecuted by trial attorneys Nathaniel B. Edmonds and Guy D. Singer of the Fraud Section, and trial attorney Peter R. Zeidenberg of the Public Integrity Section, both part of the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice. The case and the ongoing investigation are being led by special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the GSA Office of Inspector General, the Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General, and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division.

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